

(19) World Intellectual Property Organization
International Bureau



(43) International Publication Date
9 August 2001 (09.08.2001)

PCT

(10) International Publication Number
WO 01/56667 A2

(51) International Patent Classification⁷: **A63B 63/00**

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(21) International Application Number: PCT/GB01/00490

(22) International Filing Date: 7 February 2001 (07.02.2001)

(25) Filing Language: English

(26) Publication Language: English

(30) Priority Data:
0002777.1 7 February 2000 (07.02.2000) GB

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(81) Designated States (*national*): AE, AG, AL, AM, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BR, BY, BZ, CA, CH, CN, CR, CU, CZ, DE, DK, DM, DZ, EE, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP, KE, KG, KP, KR, KZ, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LV, MA, MD, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, MZ, NO, NZ, PL, PT, RO, RU, SD, SE, SG, SI, SK, SL, TJ, TM, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, US, UZ, VN, YU, ZA, ZW.

(84) Designated States (*regional*): ARIPO patent (GH, GM, KE, LS, MW, MZ, SD, SL, SZ, TZ, UG, ZW), Eurasian patent (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM), European patent (AT, BE, CH, CY, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE, TR), OAPI patent (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GW, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).

Published:

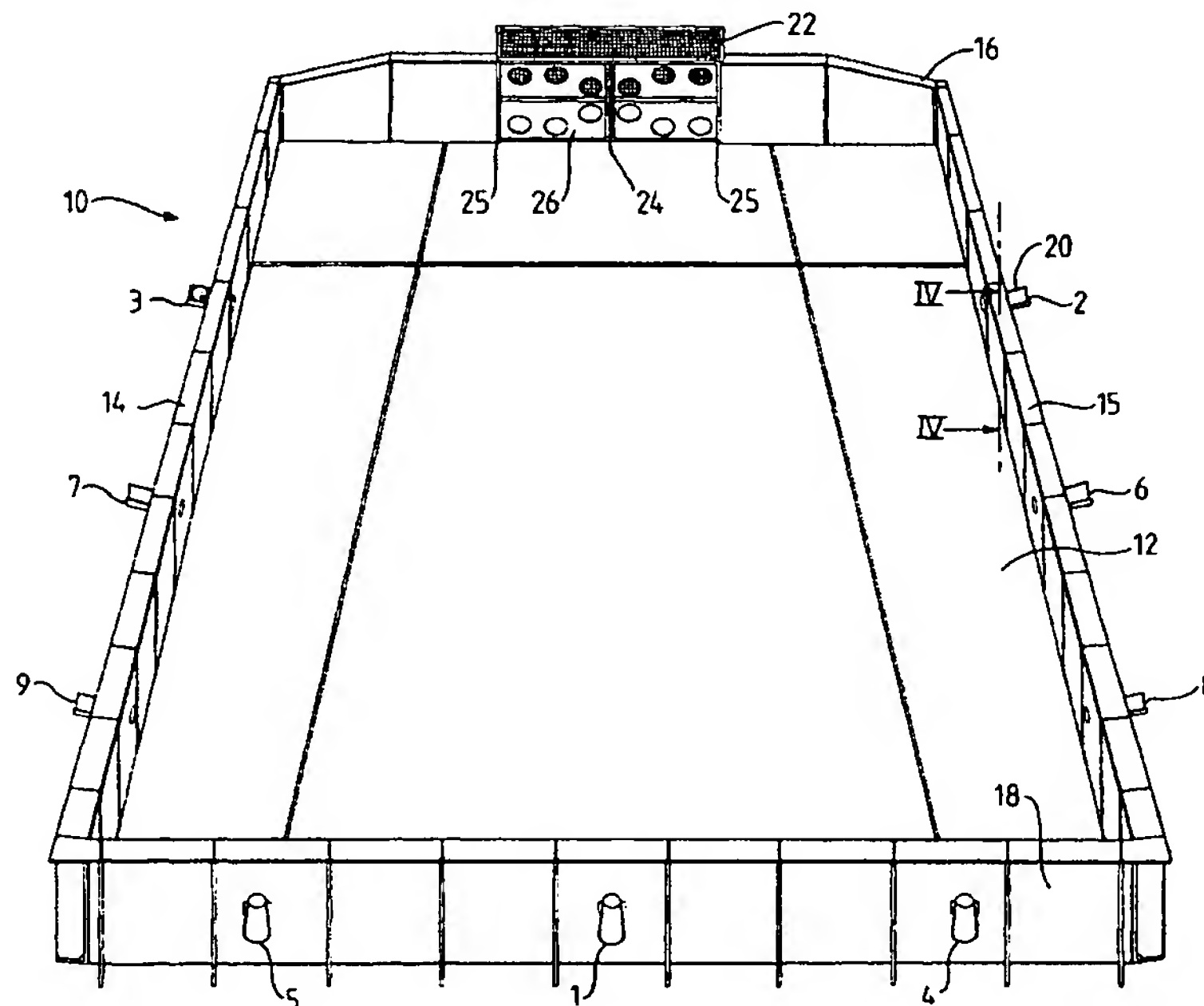
— without international search report and to be republished upon receipt of that report

For two-letter codes and other abbreviations, refer to the "Guidance Notes on Codes and Abbreviations" appearing at the beginning of each regular issue of the PCT Gazette.

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(54) Title: A SPORTS COURT



(57) Abstract: A sports court (10) comprising a pitch (12) and a goal panel (26) positioned in front of a goal, wherein the goal panel (26) has openings formed through it. Extending upwardly from the pitch are walls (14, 16 and 18) that form a substantially closed court. Formed through the walls (14, 16 and 18) are ball release openings through which balls are released into the court. In use, players compete to pass a ball through the openings (28) in the goal panel (26). Scores are allocated on the basis of the number of successful passes through the openings in the panel (26).

A SPORTS COURT

This invention relates to a sports court, in particular an indoor football court.

5 According to the present invention there is provided a sports court and goal panel as defined in the independent claims. More specifically, according to the present invention, there is provided a sports court comprising a pitch and a goal panel, wherein the goal panel has goal openings formed through it.

10 In use, players compete to pass a ball through the openings in the goal panel. Scores are allocated on the basis of the number of successful passes through the panel openings.

Some preferred features are defined in the dependent claims.

15 Preferably, the openings in the panel are provided in a set pattern. Preferably, the panel can be changed, thereby to provide a different overall pattern of openings. Preferably more than one panel is provided, for example four panels. Preferably, the panels can be interchanged. The panels may be interchanged by
20 moving them in a set rotation. For example, where there are four panels, each occupying a quadrant of a goal, each panel may be moved to the next quadrant. Preferably, this is done in a clockwise direction.

Preferably, extending upwardly from the pitch are walls for forming a
25 substantially closed court. Formed through the walls may be ball release openings through which balls are released into the court. Preferably, three ball release openings are provided, equally spaced along three of the court walls. A

chute may extend through each ball release opening, which chute preferably points downwardly.

5 The pitch may be divided into various areas, using markings on its surface. For example, four start areas or boxes may be provided, one in each of the corners of the court. A goal area may be provided, extending around the goal panel. A centre court area may define the centre of the pitch and constitute the main pitch playing area. Extending along the edges of the pitch may be side court areas that may also be used as "start areas". A rear court area may extend along a
10 rear wall. Preferably, three penalty spots are provided, two of which are located towards the rear of the pitch and are equidistant from the goal and one of which is relatively near the goal.

15 Preferably, the pitch is shaped as a trapezium, which trapezium is symmetrical about a line that bisects its parallel sides.

A goal net may be provided behind the goal panel.

20 A sports court in which the present invention is embodied will now be described by way of example only and with reference to the following drawings of which:

- Figure 1 is an elevated view of the court looking at the goal;
- Figure 2 is an elevated view of the court from behind the goal;
- 25 Figure 3 is a side elevation of the court;
- Figure 4 is an expanded view of a section on line IV-IV of Figure 1, from inside the court;

Figure 5 is a view similar to that of Figure 4, except from outside the court;

Figure 6 shows an entrance to the court,

5 Figure 7 is an expanded elevation of the goal area of Figures 1 to 3 in which the goal panels are in an open position;

Figure 8 is an expanded view of the goal, in which the goal panels are rotated;

Figure 9 shows various goal panel options;

Figure 10 shows various other goal panel options, and

10 Figure 11 indicates various game areas.

Figures 1 to 3 show a court 10 that comprises a pitch 12 that is shaped as a trapezium, which trapezium is symmetrical about a line that bisects its parallel sides. Extending upwardly from the pitch 12 are opposing side-walls 14 and 15
15 and front and rear walls 16 and 18 respectively. Front wall 16 is of substantially constant height and relatively low. The side-walls 14 and 15 gradually increase in height from the front wall towards the rear wall 18, which is itself of a substantially constant height. Together, the walls 14, 15, 16 and 18 form a substantially closed court.

20

Extending through the side-walls 14 and 15 and the rear wall 18 are ball release points that comprise chutes 20 that slope downwardly from an external side of the court 10 into its interior. These can be seen in detail in Figures 4 and 5. Each ball release point is numbered. The ball release points on side-wall 14 are
25 numbered 2, 6 and 8, respectively, starting from the point nearest the front wall. The ball release points on the rear wall are numbered 4, 1 and 5, respectively, starting from the point nearest the side-wall 15. The ball release points on side-

wall 15 are numbered 9, 7 and 3 respectively, starting from the point nearest the rear wall.

5 Located at the narrow end of the pitch 12 in a gap through the front wall 16 is a goal 22. The goal 22 is shaped as a standard football goal, but additionally has a post 24 that is positioned centrally between the goal posts 25. The goal 22 is a single unit and is slidably movable on runners that extend along an external side of the front wall 16. Hence, when players wish to enter the court, the goal 22 is slid to the side, thereby to provide an entrance into the court 10, as shown in Figure 7. Once the players move inside the court the goal 22 is moved back into the position shown in Figures 1 to 3.

15 Positioned in front of the goal 22 are four identical panels 26 that each occupies a quadrant of the goal opening. Each panel 26 is substantially rectangular and has three holes 28 formed through it, two of the holes being arranged in a line parallel to the long side of the rectangular panel and one of them being offset from the other two. Each hole 28 is large enough to allow a football to pass through it.

20 The panels 26 are each removably mounted in front of the goal 22. This can be done in various ways. For example, each panel 26 could be removably fitted into a frame, which frame is rotatably mounted on one of the goal posts 25. Alternatively, two of the panels 26 could be removably fitted into a frame 27 that is rotatably mounted on one of the goal posts 25 and the other two panels 25 26 could be removably fitted into an identical frame 27 that is rotatably mounted on the other of the goal posts 25. Alternatively, the panels may be mounted in pairs on the centre post 24, each pair being able to revolve about

that post 24, as shown in Figure 8. Of course means are provided for fixing the panels into place for.

5 By changing the relative positions of the panels 26, the overall pattern of goal openings presented to the players can be varied. Various options are shown in Figures 9 and 10. Altering the panel configuration in this way increases the skill required to win the game and so heightens the challenge presented to the players.

10 The court 10 is marked so that it is divided into various areas, as shown in Figure 11. A pair of opposing side-lines 31 are spaced from the edges of the court and extend between the front and rear walls 16 and 18, respectively. A front line 33 is spaced from the front wall 16 and extends between the side-walls 14 and 15. Also extending between the side-walls 14 and 15 is a rear line
15 35 that is spaced from and parallel to the rear wall 18. At the mid-point and extending perpendicular to each of the side-lines 31 and the front line 33 are start lines 37. Further start lines 39 extend from the intersection point of the side and front lines and the side and rear lines. These additional start lines 39 extend outwardly towards the nearest corners of the court.

20

The side-lines 31 and front and rear lines 33 and 35 respectively define nine distinct areas or boxes of the court. The first of these are four start area-corner boxes 32, each of which is located in one of the corners of the court 10. A goal area 34 extends around the goal 22, side court areas 38 extend along the side-
25 walls 14 and a rear court area 40 extends along rear wall 18. Between the other areas or boxes is a centre court area 36 that constitutes the main pitch playing area.

Each of the start area corner boxes 32, the goal area 34 and the side court areas 38 is used as a start area, where a player can be located at the commence of play. Each start area is associated with a corresponding ball release point, so
5 that where a player is located determines from which of the ball release points the ball is released when play is to be started.

Start area 1 is the goal area and is where the player stands when the ball is released from ball release point 1. Start area 2 is the corner area defined
10 between the rear wall and the side-wall 14 and is where the player stands when the ball is released from ball release point 2. Start area 4,8 is the corner area defined between the front wall and the side-wall 14 and is where the player stands when the ball is released from ball release points 4 or 8. Start area 5,9 is the corner area defined between the front wall and the side-wall 15 and is where
15 the player stands when the ball is released from ball release points 5 or 9. Start area 6 is the side court area defined between the sideline 31 and the sidewall 14 and is where the player stands when the ball is released from ball release point 6. Start area 7 is the side court area defined between the sideline 31 and the sidewall 15 and is where the player stands when the ball is released from ball
20 release point 7.

Also provided in the court are three penalty spots 42, two of which are located towards the rear of the pitch 12 and are equidistant from the goal and one of which is near the goal 22. Penalties may be taken from one of the three marked
25 spots 42 according to where the foul occurred.

The court is designed to allow, typically, two players to compete. In use,

players attempt to pass a ball through the openings in the goal panels. Scores are allocated on the basis of the number of successful passes through the panel. Unless specified otherwise, the rules concerning foul play are the same as for Association Football.

5

Matches are divided into games and sets. There are up to nine games in each set and up to five sets in each match. The winner of a set is decided by the number and type of goals scored during the nine games constituting that set. The first player to score in each game by passing the football through one of the openings in the goal panel wins that game. A goal scored through any hole in the bottom row of the goal panels is worth one point. However, any goal scored through the holes in the top row is worth two points. The player with the most points after a maximum of nine games wins that set. The winner of the match is the first player to win three of the five sets.

15

Each game in the match commences when, on the referee's whistle, a football is released into the court 10, by allowing it to roll down one of the ball release chutes. A set always commences with the ball being released from the middle release point in the rear wall 18 of the court 10 (i.e., release point 1). The point of release then rotates in a strict sequence around the court and changes at the start of each game. The sequence is rear centre, right side front, left side front, rear right, rear left, right side centre, left side centre, right side rear, left side rear.

20

When a ball is about to be released, each player must stand to one side of the start line 37 within the start area relevant to the point of release. During the first set, a player begins each game to either the right or the left of the start line

25

(viewed from the release point), according to whether the winner of the toss of a coin at the beginning of the match elects to start from either the right or the left. In the subsequent set, the players swap to the other side of the start line. The players swap sides again during each subsequent set. Once the referee's whistle
5 has blown, the players may leave the start area to get the football.

At the command, 'position' from the referee, each player must stand ready in the relevant start area. On the referee's whistle the game commences. Each game continues until one of the players scores. After each game, the players
10 have 20 seconds to return to their start area. After 10 seconds the 'position' command is given by the referee. After a further 10 seconds, the referee blows his whistle for the start of the next game. Between each set, there is a break of 5 minutes. After 4 minutes 40 seconds, the referee signals the end of the break, at which time the players must promptly take their positions for the next set.

15
Players may enter the goal area 34 only when the ball is in that area. The player in possession of the ball may take the ball into the goal area 34, and as soon as he has done so, his opponent may also enter the goal area 34. Once the ball leaves the goal area 34, both players must immediately vacate the goal area 34.
20 If either fail to do so, a penalty may be awarded.

Once the ball is in play, either player may score from any area of the court. However, if the ball is not touched by either player for a period longer than twenty seconds, a penalty foul is awarded against the player who last kicked the
25 ball. This penalty is taken from the front of the court. This rule also applies at the start of every game, when the player who won the toss or the last game is penalised.

Penalties are taken depending on where a foul is committed. If a foul is committed in the front half of the court, the penalty will be taken from the front penalty spot and will be worth one goal. If the foul occurs in the rear of the court, the penalty will be taken from either the right or left rear penalty spot and will be worth one goal for the scorer and minus one goal for the opponent. If a penalty is awarded, the player responsible shall wait in the rear of the court until the penalty has been taken. Once the ball has been kicked, the opponent may re-enter the game. A penalty is void if it does not reach the front wall 16 and shall not be re-taken, the game being re-started from the point in the release sequence at which the game started. If the penalty kick does not pass through the goal wall 24, no goal is deemed to have been scored and the game continues with the ball in play as normal. However, in these circumstances the ball must be taken out of the goal area before either player can score.

15

If the scores are level at the end of nine games, a set is decided by a penalty shoot out. A penalty shoot out is won by the first player to score more goals than his opponent from the same number of penalties taken.

20

If the football is kicked outside of the court 10 (other than by scoring a goal), a free release is awarded against the player who touched it last. The player given the benefit of the free release stands in the side or the rear court area 40 nearest to where the ball went out of play, as adjudicated by the referee. His opponent stands outside that area and must not enter until the other player has received the ball from the free release. A goal cannot be scored until the football has first been taken into the centre court area.

25

At the end of each set, the four goal panels 24 are rotated clockwise. In this way, when a new set is commenced, the players are faced with a new challenge.

5 As will be appreciated, the principles of the invention, which have been disclosed by way of example only, can be implemented in various ways. Those skilled in the art will readily recognise that modifications and changes can be made and it is not necessary to follow the strictly exemplary embodiments illustrated and described herein.

CLAIMS

1. A sports court comprising a pitch and a goal panel, wherein the goal panel has goal openings formed through it.
5
2. A sports court as claimed in claim 1, wherein the goal openings are provided in a set pattern, preferably asysmetric.
3. A sports court as claimed in claim 1 or claim 2, wherein more than one goal
10 panel is provided
4. A sports court as claimed in claim 3, wherein four goal panels are provided.
5. A sports court as claimed in claim 3 or claim 4, wherein the goal panels are
15 interchangeable.
6. A sports court as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, wherein the or each goal panel is removable.
- 20 7. A sports court as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, wherein extending upwardly from the pitch are walls that define a substantially closed court.
8. A sports court as claimed in claim 7, wherein ball release openings are
25 formed through the walls.
9. A sports court as claimed in claim 8, wherein three ball release openings are

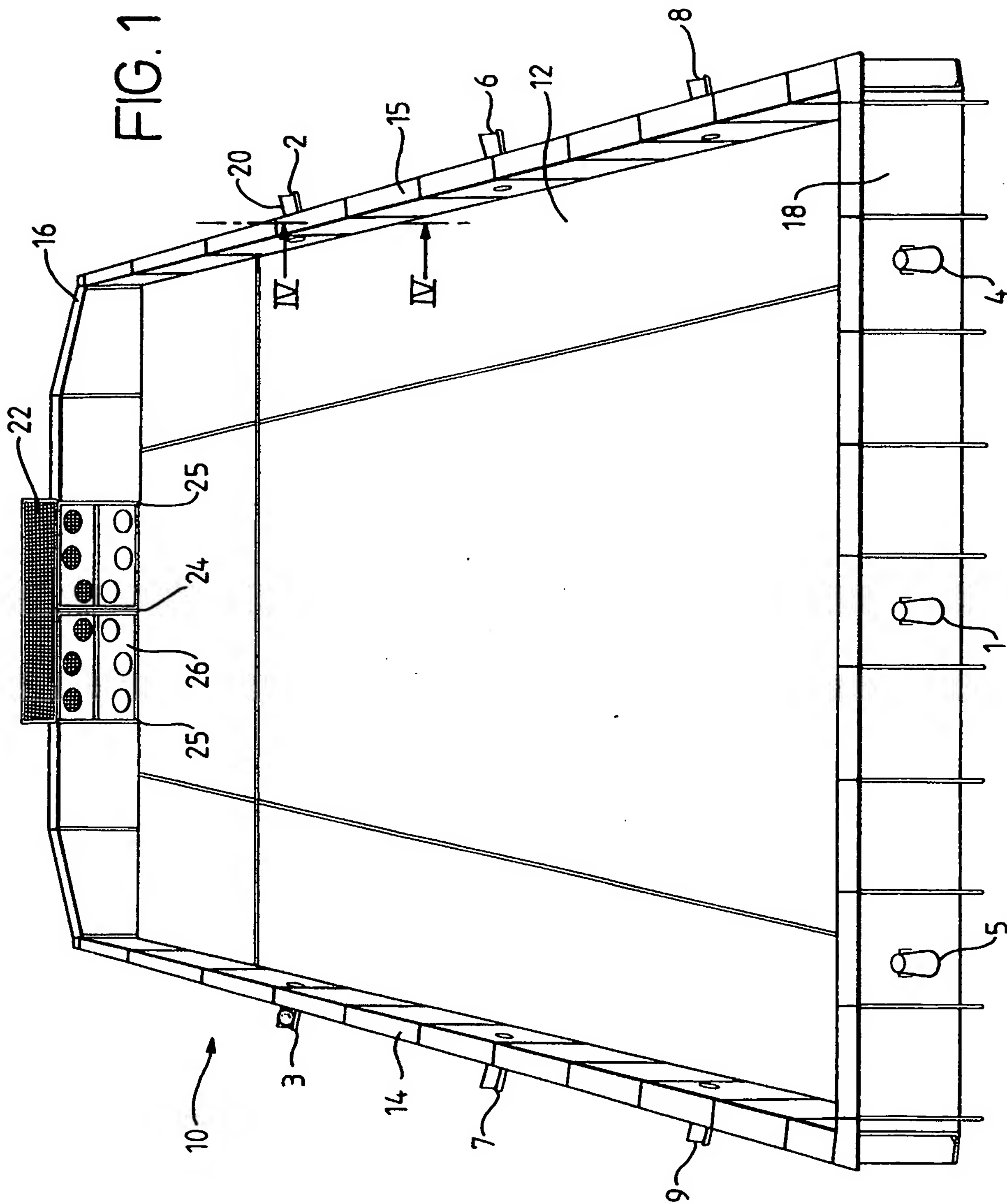
9. provided, equally spaced along three of the court walls.
10. A sports court as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, wherein the goal panel is substantially perpendicular to the pitch.
- 5 11. A sports court as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, wherein the goal panel is supported on goal posts.
- 10 12. A sports court as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, wherein a net is provided behind the goal panel.
- 15 13. A sports court as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, wherein the pitch is shaped as a trapezium, which trapezium is symmetrical about a line that bisects its parallel sides.
- 20 14. A goal panel adapted to be used with a sports court according to any of the preceding claims, wherein the panel has at least one goal opening formed through it.
- 25 15. A goal panel having at least one goal opening formed through it, the goal panel being adapted to be fitted in front of goal posts in such a manner that the goal panel lies in a substantially vertical plane.
16. A goal panel as claimed in claim 14 or claim 15, wherein the panel is substantially rectangular.
17. A goal panel as claimed in claim 16, wherein the opening is substantially

circular.

18. A sports court substantially as described hereinbefore with reference to the accompanying drawings.

5

19. A goal panel substantially as described hereinbefore with reference to the accompanying drawings and as shown in Figure 1 or Figure 7 or Figure 8 or Figure 9 or Figure 10.



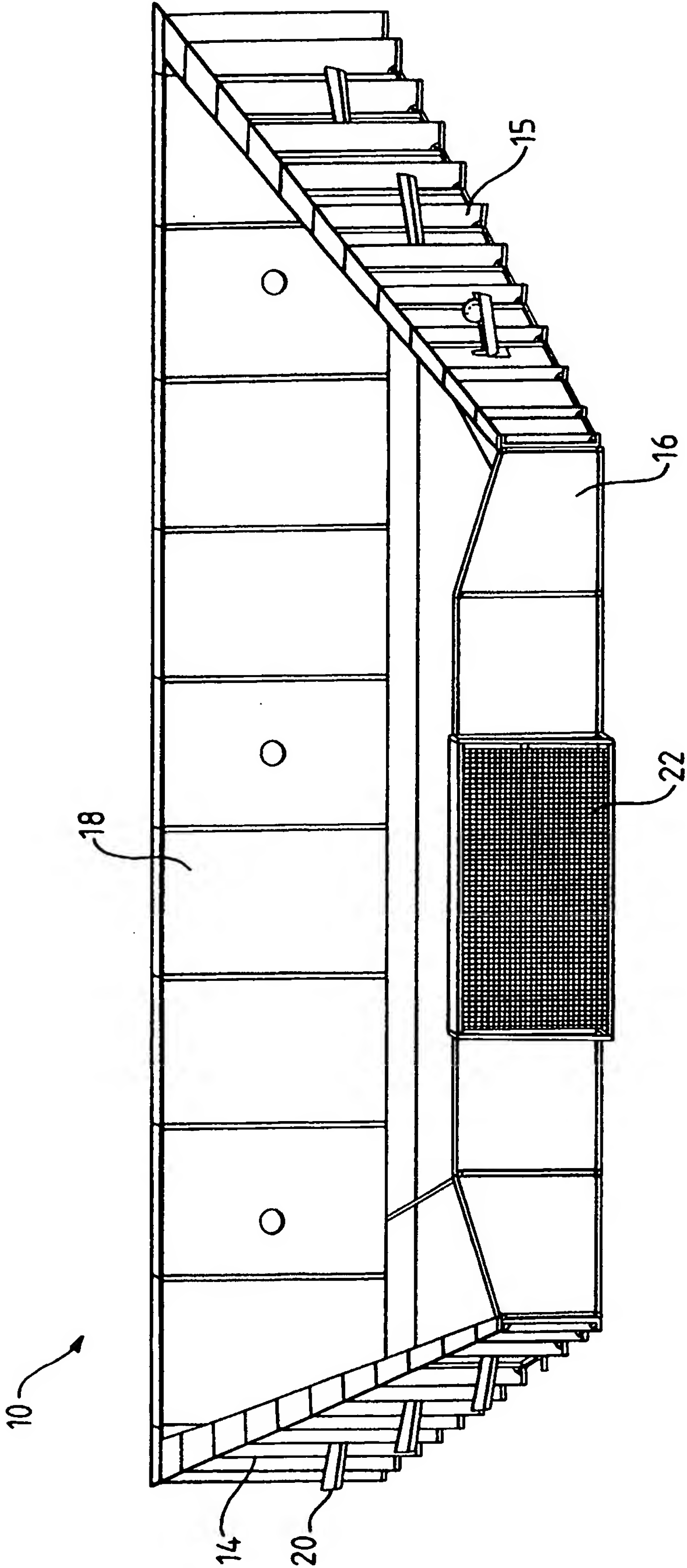


FIG. 2

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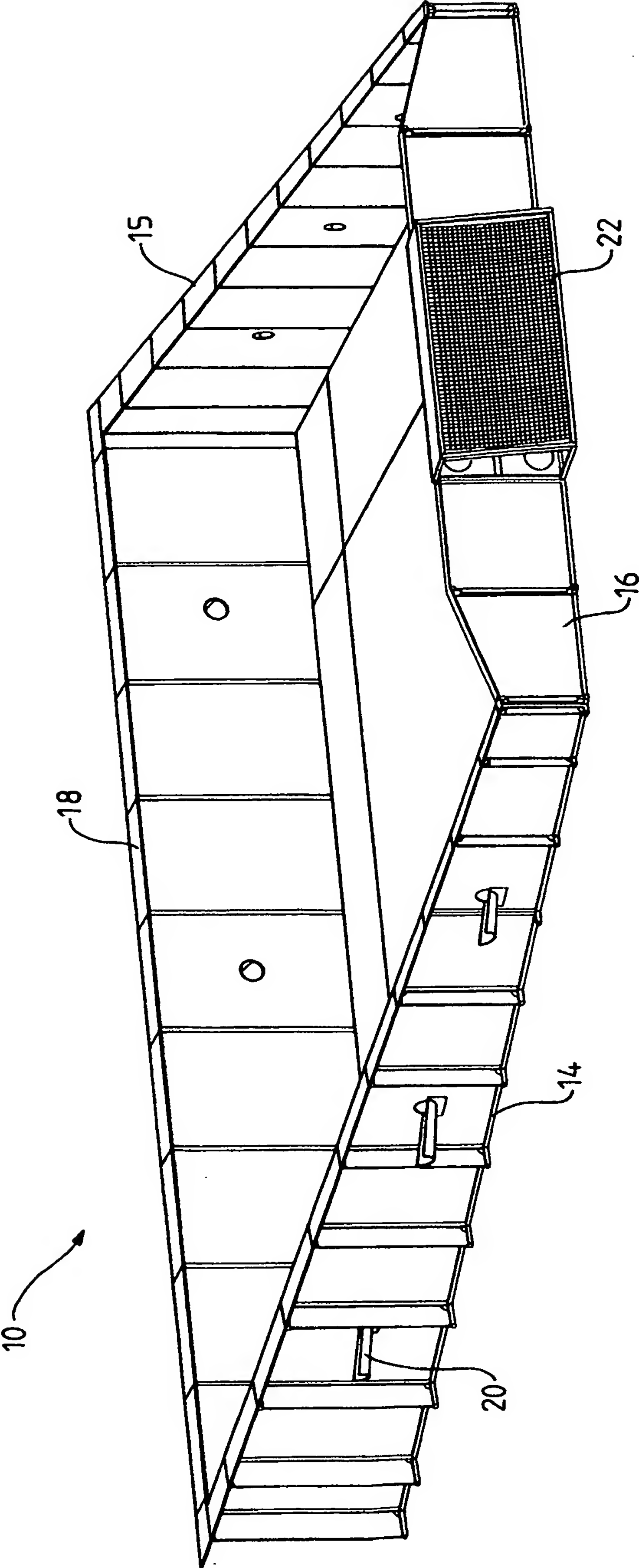


FIG. 3

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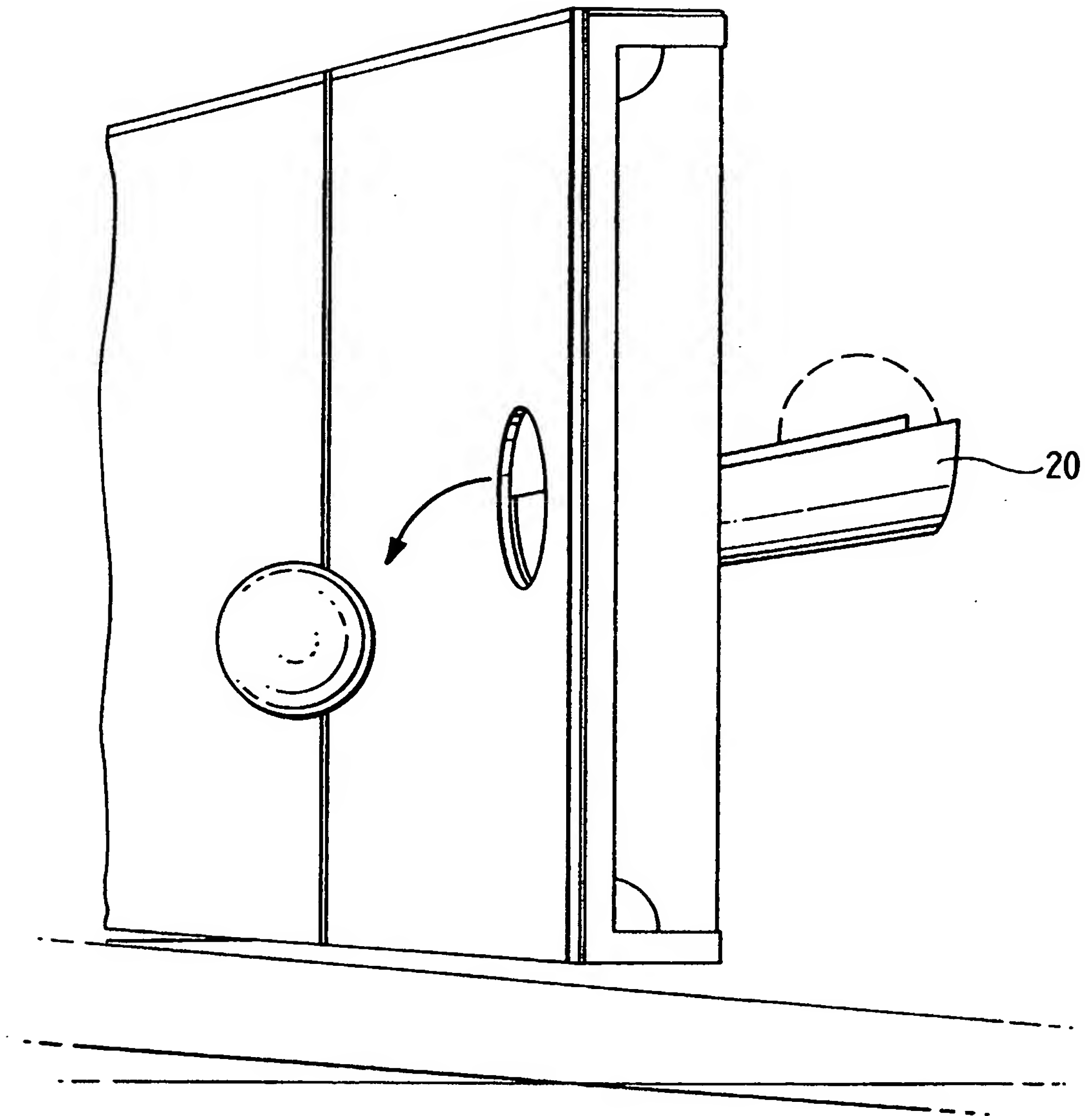


FIG. 4

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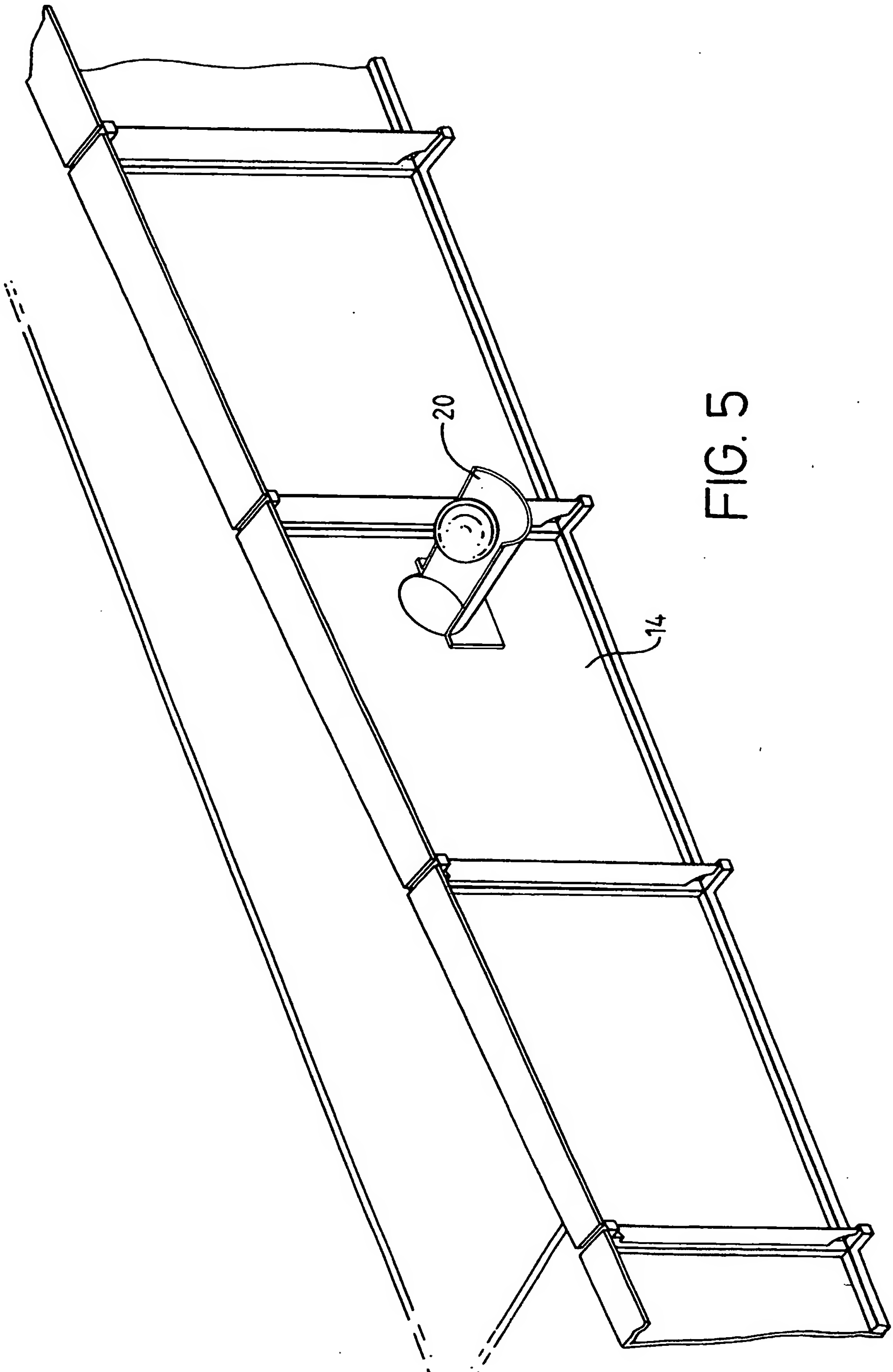
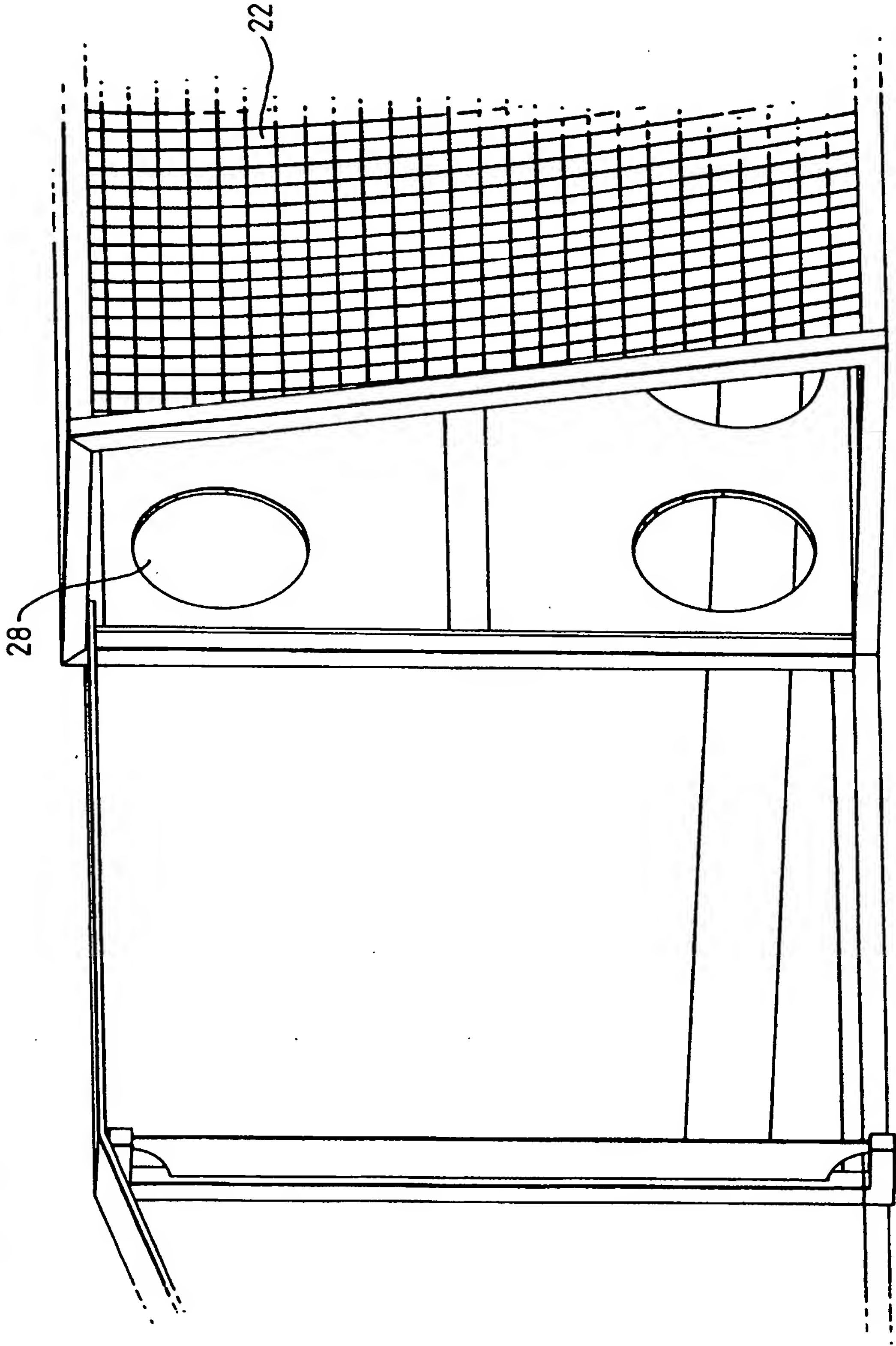


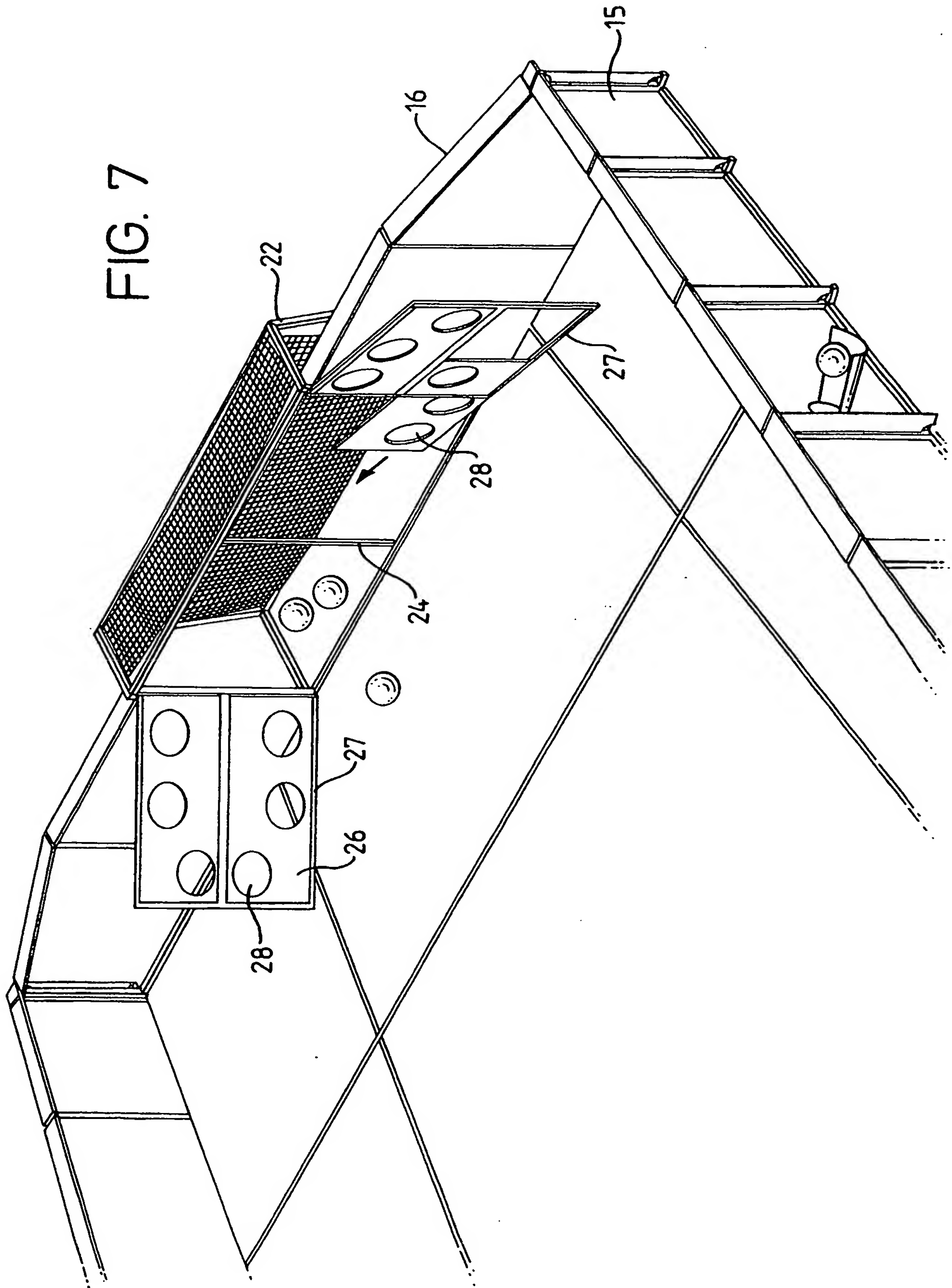
FIG. 5

FIG. 6



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FIG. 7



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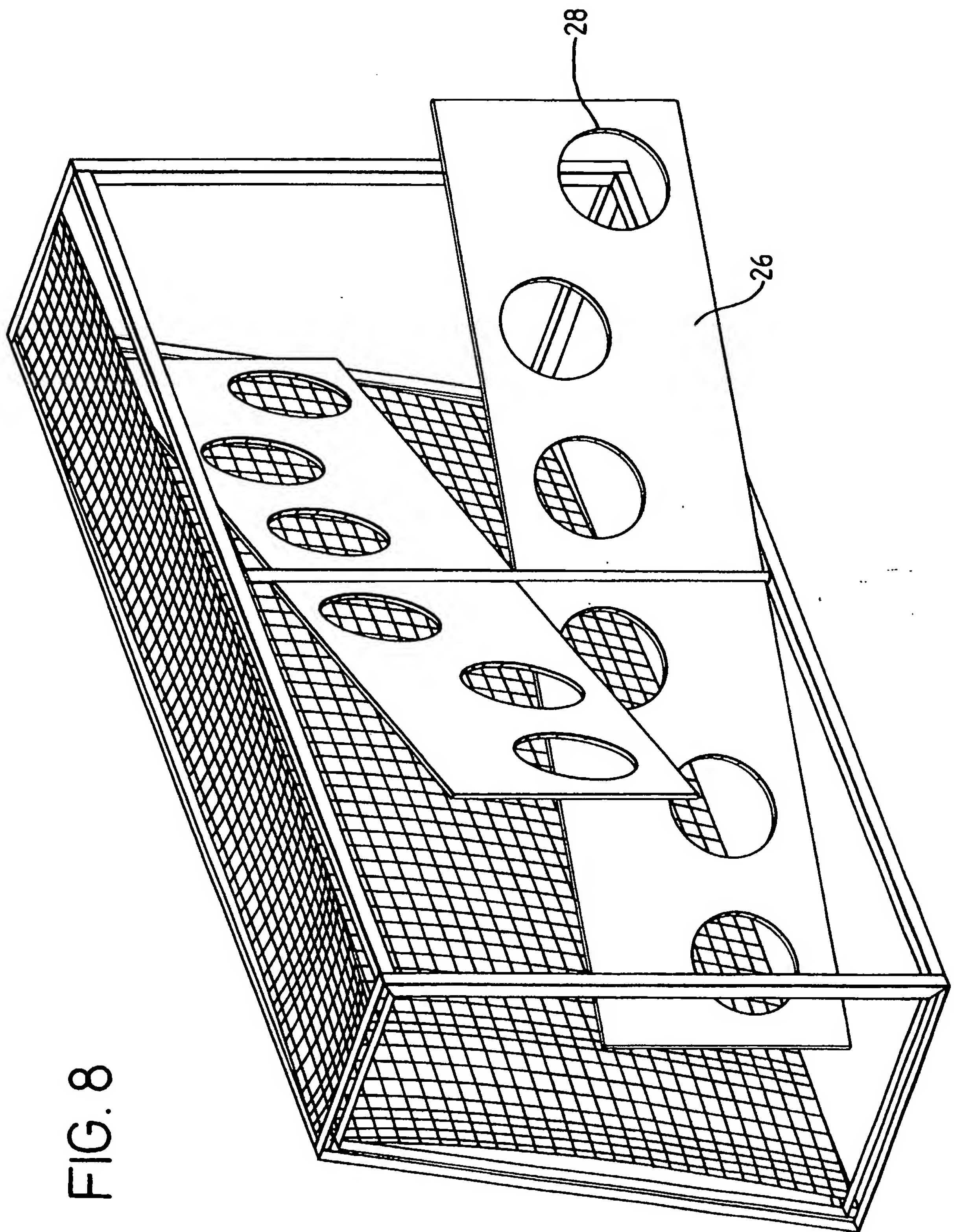


FIG. 8

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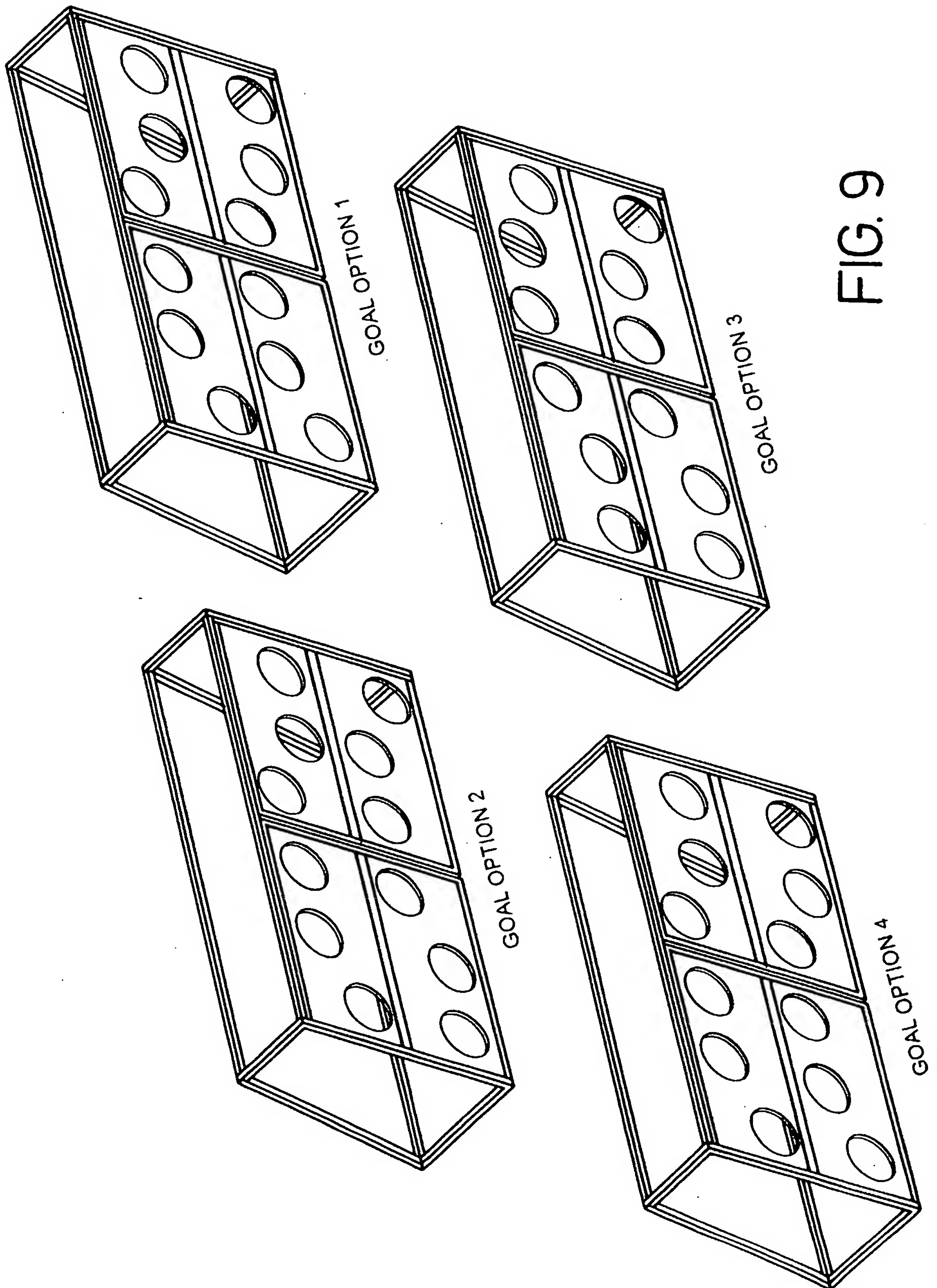


FIG. 9

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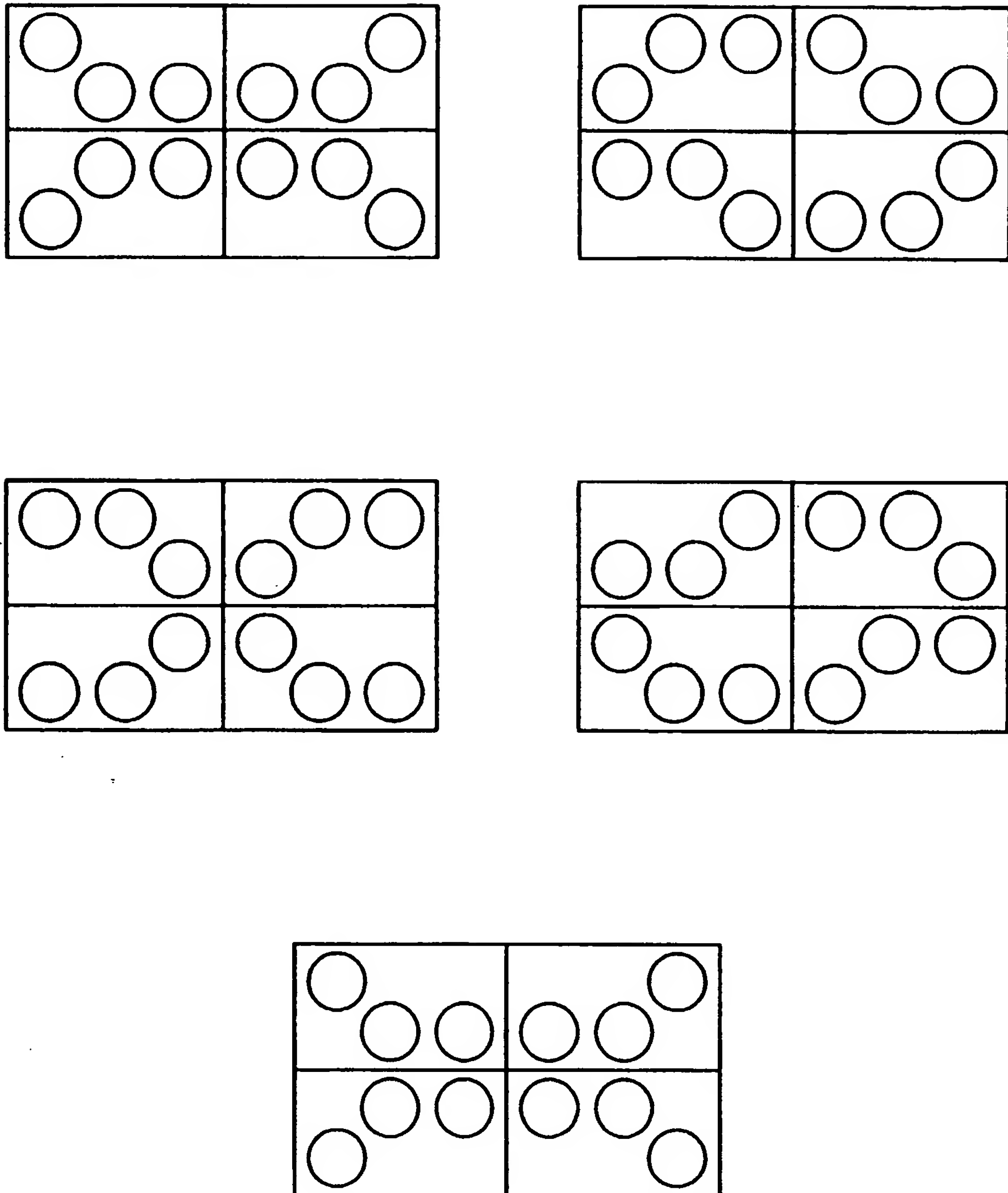


FIG. 10

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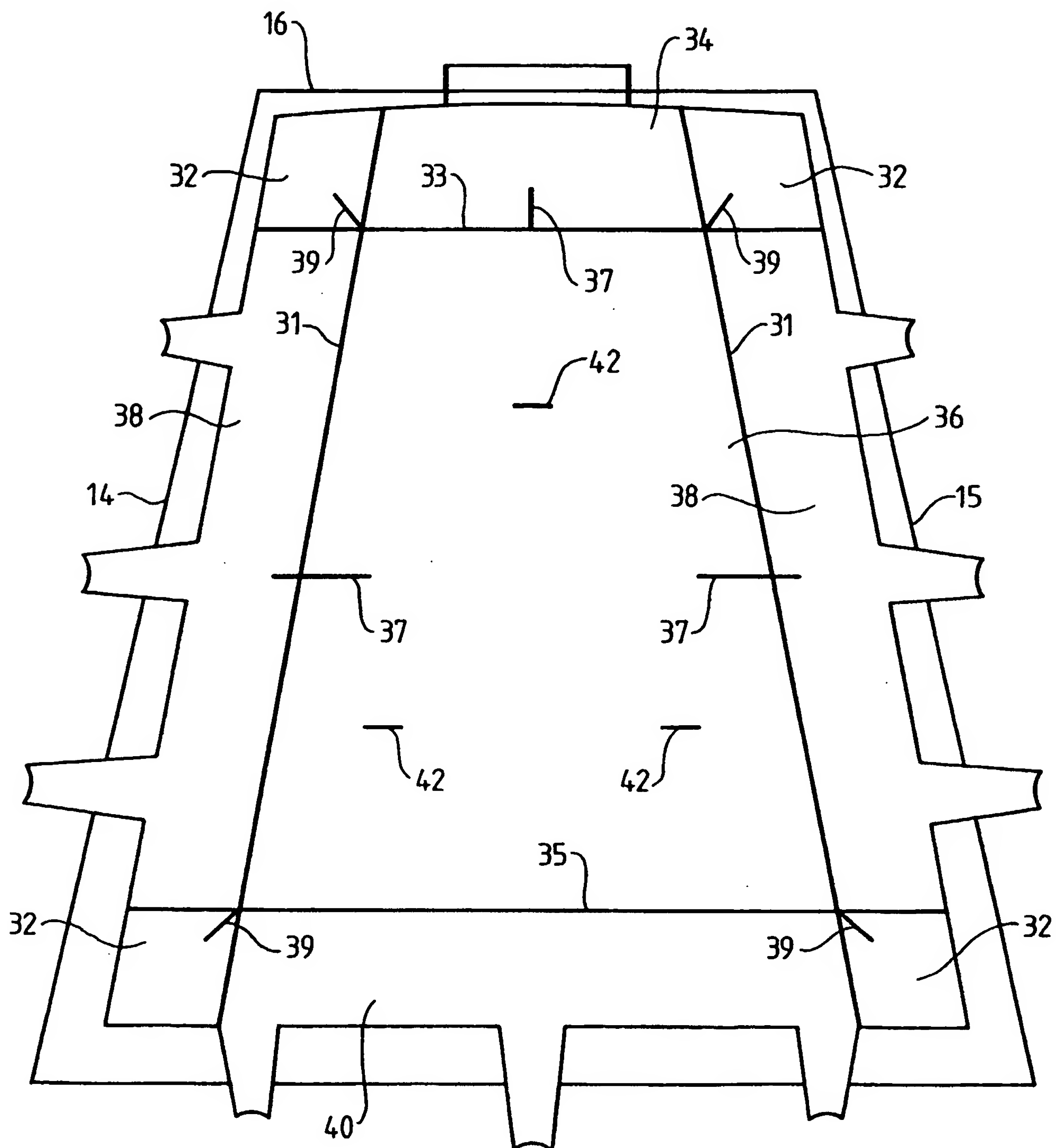


FIG. 11